

Common Questions about the SIS[®] Assessment



WHAT is the SIS[™]?

This instrument was published by the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) in 2004. It is designed to measure a person's support needs. While most other assessments identify tasks that a person can and can't do, the SIS[™] measures the type and intensity of assistance that an individual needs to successfully complete tasks of everyday life. Some areas measured are: home living, community living, lifelong learning, employment, health and safety, social activities, and protection and advocacy. Activities are ranked according to frequency, amount, and type of support within the scale. The SIS[™] was designed to:

- Assess support needs of individuals ages 16 to 72
- Determine the intensity of the need
- Monitor individual progress and evaluate outcomes over time
- Focus on the individual's supports needs rather than skill deficits
- Provide validated knowledge about the individual to develop individualized, person-centered plans.
- Fill an important niche not covered by other measurement scales.

The SIS[®] concentrates on age appropriate adult activities. It breaks the myth that persons with disabilities are not capable of everyday lives. This helps the planning team develop support plans based on life activities enjoyed by all similarly-aged members of the community. The SIS[®] shifts the support planning focus from "doing for" to "doing with," an important consideration when developing formal and informal support networks. This shift is very important as it emphasizes successful participation and inclusion in age appropriate activities across all aspects of adult life. Past assessments tended to be biased toward '*caring for*' the individual. The SIS[®] encourages a different way of looking at supports. It promotes focus on helping the individual participate as fully as possible towards having an everyday life.

The tool can help all who are invested in developing programs to address gaps in service availability. The assessment summary report lists the supports needed for the individual to be successful in a wide range of everyday activities across eight significant life areas. This information, together with what is *important to* the individual and *important for* the individual, encourages the planning team to discuss an entire range of positive supports.

WHO is Ascend and What is Ascend's role?

Ascend Management Innovations (Ascend) headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. has national experience conducting special assessments for many different types of programs and services. We are very excited to have Ascend implementing the SIS[®] in Tennessee. Ascend is designated by CMS as a Quality Improvement Organization-like (QIO-like) entity. A QIO-like entity is an organization that the federal government authorizes to conduct independent, quality-focused reviews and that has strong advocacy/consumer emphasis in all operations. You can learn more about Ascend at www.ascendami.com. Ascend's task is to ensure that these interviews are done in a respectful and consistent way by every assessor, every time.

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WHO can participate in Interviews?

Participants, or *Respondents*, must include at least two people who have known the person assessed for at least 3 months. Respondents can be the person, family members, friends, direct support or other staff from providers. The person may choose to be an active participant in the interview. The respondent must be able to describe, in a very detailed way, the day-to-day supports the person needs to successfully accomplish each task. For this reason, the respondent must have known the person very well from direct experience and for at least 3 months. The SIS™ meeting will be scheduled as one meeting with all respondents in attendance.

WHO will conduct interviews?

Ascend's assessment teams include highly trained and qualified assessors. All assessors meet AAIDD training criteria and have at least 3 years of experience working with people who have diagnosis of intellectual or developmental disabilities. Assessors are independent, impartial and conflict free and do not have a stake in the outcome of any one particular assessment.

HOW will the information be used?

As assessors complete each interview, they fill out the SIS™ interview booklet and take notes. It is important to know that all information from interviews will be kept confidential. The assessment is one of the tools used to help in developing the Individual Support Plan (ISP). A report of each SIS™ will be available to the agencies once completed. Family and individuals can request a copy from the ISC.

WHY is a Universal Assessment being conducted?

A universal assessment is required by the federal agency that approves and helps with funding of waiver services, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). It also:

- Provides person-centered and specific information to facilitate service plan discussions.
- Focuses on level of support needed by a person, not deficits in skills.
- Advances planning for future service and capacity needs and a guide for future state and local planning.
- Assists as one of many useful tools to help in developing the Individual Support Plan (ISP). The ISP is developed by the planning team, using all available information, including the SIS™.

WHEN will interviews begin?

DIDD plans to phase-in the assessments for people who currently are being served by the waivers starting in May 2012. This phasing-in process will occur over a multi-year cycle.

HOW will I be contacted?

Ascend assessors will call provider liaisons to confirm basic information, preferred respondents and to set up interviews. Assessors will ask who should be in the interview and if there are any special accommodations that should be taken into consideration during the interview. Make sure to let Ascend know of cultural preferences, speech/language or hearing difficulties or the assistance of an language interpreter.

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WHAT will happen on the day of the interview?

The assessor will explain how the interview works. During the interview, the assessor will ask you questions like:

“What type of support does Jane need to successfully get dressed each day?”

“How frequently does Jane need this type of support?”

“On a typical day when support of this type is needed, how much time should be devoted?”

Your job is simply to answer the questions as well as you can. If a person in the group doesn't quite agree on the answers to a question, the assessor will ask extra questions to be sure that they understand the view-points and help with the process of coming to agreement. The interview can be expected to take 3 to 4 hours to complete.

At the end of the interview, the assessor will give respondents a satisfaction survey that can be mailed to Ascend or completed online. This survey is a very important opportunity to give feedback and help ensure that interviews are conducted respectfully and that respondents have a good experience as information is shared.

WHERE will interviews take place?

Assessments will take place wherever the person and other respondents choose. It should be a place where all respondents agree to meet and can include (but is not limited to) the person's home, his or her day service provider, or the home of a family member or friend. If the person has chosen not to participate in the meeting, the respondents may choose the location. It is best to select a place that is quiet, private, comfortable and appropriate to meet the person's needs.

HOW will quality be ensured?

Quality is very important to DIDD and Ascend. Ascend uses several different ways to ensure the administration of high quality, respectful assessments.

First, all assessors participate in thorough training. One part of training is held by AAIDD certified SIS® trainers who are experts that work for the publisher of the SIS®. They teach Ascend assessors how to conduct interviews, how to complete the SIS® and then observe assessors in practice interviews. At the end of the training, assessors must pass testing to ensure they are completing the assessments according to all of the publisher's rules. Ascend teaches all internal staff about DIDD rules and standards and provides ongoing training in key content areas.

Every SIS® assessment is monitored for quality. Ascend has a full team of quality reviewers whose job is to monitor the quality of each and every SIS™ assessment and review each satisfaction survey. In addition, digital recordings will be reviewed to ensure assessors follow training procedures. The quality team meets regularly with Ascend assessors to teach and give feedback.

WHERE can I get more information?

If you have questions or concerns about Ascend or assessors, contact them toll free at 1-877-431-1388. If you would like information about the SIS® instrument (*how it was developed and what it measures*), a good place to start is to look at the information posted at the SIS™ website at www.siswebsite.org.